Cooperative Kernels: GPU Multitasking for Blocking Algorithms

Tyler Sorensen, Hugues Evrard, and Alastair F. Donaldson
Imperial College London

Motivation

Problem: Graphics freeze while application is executing!
Missed graphics calls
Execution Period

 MANY CURRENT GPU SYSTEMS DO NOT PROVIDE MULTITASKING. AN APPLICATION OWNS THE GPU UNTIL IT FINISHES. GPUs OFTEN DRIVE THE OS GUI, THUS, EXECUTING LONG GPU APPS FREEZES THE SYSTEM, REDUCING USABILITY.

Motivation

Long running blocking GPU application (e.g. parallel graph traversal)

FOR CPU MULTICORE SYSTEMS, PREEMPTION SOLVES THE MULTITASKING PROBLEM. PREEMPTION IS THE ABILITY TO SAVE THE STATE OF A PROGRAMS THREAD AND REMOVE IT FROM A HARDWARE RESOURCE TO RETURN LATER.

GPU preemption

For CPU multicore systems, preemption solves the multitasking problem. Preemption is the ability to save the state of a program's thread and remove it from a hardware resource to return later.

On GPUs, preemption is difficult due to the large state that needs to be saved. A GPU workgroup’s state contains up to 256 threads and a local cache. Efficiently saving and restoring is non-trivial.

Cooperative kernels

3 new programming instructions for stateless multitasking

offering_kill() A calling workgroup is ready to be killed if the system needs the resource for another task
request_fork() A calling workgroup may be forked (copied), if the system has available resources.
resizing_barrier() Synchronizes all workgroups in the program. At this point workgroups may be killed or forked depending on resource availability or contention.

Programming model

Currently programmers are responsible for understanding and adding cooperative instructions correctly.

Cooperative kernels are backwards compatible. New instructions can be treated as no-ops on existing GPUs.

Ported 8 existing applications with minimal changes following simple guidelines.

Example: graph traversal

Results

Prototype framework implemented for Intel GPUs. Models two tasks (graphics and long-running). Graphics tasks of three levels of intensity tested. We maintain smooth GUI on all graphics tasks with reasonable overhead on the long-running application.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workload</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Execution</th>
<th>Overhead</th>
<th>Workgroups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Light</td>
<td>70 ms</td>
<td>3 ms</td>
<td>1.00x</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>40 ms</td>
<td>3 ms</td>
<td>1.03x</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy</td>
<td>40 ms</td>
<td>10 ms</td>
<td>1.28x</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Support: EPSRC Fellowship EP/N026314, and a gift from Intel Corporation